1: Garnett B-4, 5 (ca. 1880) 1891
MA11 Kurd MA11
Yezidis MH10

contrast to the quiet solemnity which is characteristic of Moslems generally in the presence of death, is a most impressive sight. If the deceased has been a person of consequence, military standards are borne in the procession, and, in some places, Kermanshah for instance, the body is accompanied to the grave with music and singing. When the funeral leaves the house, men and women rush wildly out, uttering cries and shrieks, and tearing their hair and clothes. Some raise their hands to heaven, others bow themselves to the earth, and cast dust upon their heads, expressing both in sound and gesture the very abandonment of grief.

The funeral rites of the Yezidis are both peculiar and interesting. When a member of this sect is believed to be at the point of death, a *kawwal* is called in, who pours into the mouth of the moribund a quantity of water. If he should expire before this ceremony has been performed, it is deferred until his body is carried to the grave. The body is laid out with the arms crossed over the breast, and not, as with the Moslems, extended by the sides. In the coffin are placed a piece of bread, some coins, and a stick, for the use of the deceased when the "questioners" appear, for, like the Moslems, the Yezidis believe in *post-mortem* catechists. Should Mounkir, when he arrives, attended by his scribe Nekir, to interrogate him concerning his faith and the character of his life, pronounce him unworthy to cross the threshold of Paradise, the dead man tries to bribe him to alter his decision, first with the bread, then with the silver. If these are unavailing, he resorts

put on dark coloured clothing, black or deep blue. For most persons, an annual visit to the grave is required, and at this time a sheep is sacrificed and its flesh distributed to the poor. Wealthier persons may enjoy weekly visits and sacrifices, and those of the lower classes must often ignore even the yearly sacrifice. The funerals of women and children, depending on the status of their husbands or fathers, are conducted with less ostentation. There is no definite pattern of commemoration, weekly or annual, and, in answer to the inquiry, it was always said that these memorial parties of both men and women visited the grave "as long as all shall live."

The cemetery of Rowanduz occupies the flat crest of the hill behind the town, and is dominated by a large oak tree, one of the few in the area, a point which will be encountered again. The graves are oriented in parallel lines with their heads pointed to the northwest. Most are oblong mounds plastered with mortar rising about a foot above the surface of the ground with a crudely hewn slab of stone, several feet in height, at each end. In some cases, the headstone of one serves as the foot of the next. Only a few have inscriptions, some etched and others carved in relief, and there was only one sarcophagus in the graveyard, a box of stone slabs bound with metal clasps and elaborately carved decorations. Family burial plots are separated by low fences of interlaced thorn. Two graves were surrounded by a low, quadrilateral rubble wall, indicating the grave of a sayyid, a descendant of

the Prophet's Tribe, or a holy man. The identities of 766
these two had been forgotten. In one there was the
conventional white rag tied to a pole leaning against the
wall, and in the other a tattered green banner hanging from
a flagpole whose ornament was a flat metal hand, the [751]
"Hand of Fatima" previously mentioned. Some graves had a 764
large quantity of broken blue porcelain scattered over them,
and it was said that this custom was followed if the
deceased was a young man, both to indicate the grave as
such and to avert further misfortune. There are indica-
tions, however, that breaking porcelain at death is a
cultural trait of some antiquity, and further study might
prove it an interesting index of historical connection. The
townspeople seem to take little care of their graveyard, [233]
and flocks customarily find pasture there, gathering under
the oak for shelter in the summer heat.

The mausoleum of Isma'il Beg might be mentioned 766
separately, because it is not found in the graveyard, but
beside the great house now ruled by Lali Khan, and differs
considerably from the typical Kurdish grave described above.
It is a small, square wooden building with a pitched roof
(itself a rarity in Kurdistan) entered by a door kept
locked during the night. The interior walls and ceiling
are plastered and painted with a light wash. To the
right of the door the sarcophagus stands, covered with
cloth so that identification of its material was not per-
mitted. Against the center of the wall facing the door,

next to the sarcophagus, is a wooden stand on which are to be found bowls of flowers and a framed photograph of the deceased. Visitors to the house are expected to call at the mausoleum, and to recite the Fatiha, the opening chapter of the Quran, for the benefit of the dead. A tomb arranged in this way, while it is not usual in Kurdistan, is characteristically Islamic, and similar structures for the burial of great persons may be encountered almost everywhere in the Middle East.

In closing this section, it might be remembered that it was chosen to confine the discussion to the Kurdish townspeople. The family life of the Kurdish aristocracy is identical with that of the commoners of the town, save in the broader inclusion of relatives in the familiya and in the size and splendor of its celebrations. That of the government elite, the officials and officers of Arab or Turkish descent, has a background elsewhere in Iraq. The language and customs in an official's family are usually Arabic. This last, however, must be taken with qualification because the government elite are largely recruited from the upper class of society, and, as educated "moderns," may ignore, or, indeed, be ignorant of the folk customs of their village or town of origin. Similarly, the family of a married official, if he has brought his wife to Rowanduz, is limited in the sense that it is separated from the large body of kindred to which it belongs in another area, and a number of events in the official's life, such as inheritance

4: Hansen E-5 (1957) 1961 MA11 Kurd MA11

DEATH

Hospitals, *xastaxâna*, are to be found in provincial towns like Halabja and Sulaimani and, of course, in the larger cities in the country. In Halabja I found that the male ward only had male nurses. In the villages there was no doctor, only, for example in Sargalu, a trained male nurse with a supply of medicaments for distribution[173]. In regard to the attitude to medical assistance, my interpreter's father refused to allow a doctor to be summoned or for any of the patients in the house to be taken by cab to see one, during the outbreak of Asiatic influenza in Sulaimani in 1957. In the same house my interpreter's mother refused to seek medical aid for rheumatic pains in the back and possibly fever. One of the daughters stood on her back whilst she lay huddled up on the floor and massaged her in this way. A child in Topzawa with fever, who was taken to the small hospital at Dokan on the following day, was the day previous undressed by an elderly woman and smeared over the whole body with freshly-churned butter.

The sick bed in the home is only used when the patient cannot stand up; even influenza patients in Sulaimani were taken on evening visits to the neighbours. For headaches they were given a bandage round the forehead[174], and sufferers often went to sleep in the house where there were guests, reappearing later in the evening. During the influenza epidemic, no measures were taken to isolate the eating and drinking utensils of the sick from those of the rest of the family. Spitting was much resorted to in the courtyard, on the clay roof and on the clay floor[175]. Broken arms and legs were ill tended, grew together badly, resulting in mis-shapen limbs, cases of which I observed with small children both in Sulaimani and Serkan. There was no snake serum in the villages. A harvester in Topzawa and a boy in Balkha who were bitten by snakes were taken by mule and later by hired car or bus a long distance to hospital for treatment. Spraying with DDT was used against vermin in the part of Kurdistan I visited. There letters painted on the walls of houses indicated that this had been done. According to Wilkinson, this spraying is done annually in the villages[176].

Neither the sick nor the dying were isolated even if it was possible to arrange a sickroom in the house.

Burial. No deaths took place among adults in the homes I stayed in in Kurdistan, but outside the mosque at Mirza Rustam I had an opportunity to study the two objects used for the washing and transportation of the dead. The one was an oblong, very large knee-high table with a very heavy top and thick legs on which the corpse was washed. This was lent out for three days to the home where death had taken place and was then returned to the mosque—an understandable arrangement as in this cultural pattern the table is not a settled institution, but an exception. By the side of this laying-out table stood a bier, an oblong, wooden crate with a flat base, low legs and two short carrying poles at each end. This also belonged to the mosque. On this the body, clad in an unsewn costume and wrapped in the cerements, but without a coffin, was transported to the burial ground outside the town[177]. The same type is found in Arabia[178] and Egypt[179].

Two children's deaths, a little girl's and a little boy's, took place among the people I lived with. Even though it was a matter of a child's funeral I observed certain differences, which have their parallels in adult funerals. As soon as death had taken place the child was taken up from its cradle

4: Hansen E-5 (1957) 1961 MA11 Kurd MA11

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Fig. 93. Treatment for rheumatic pains. The daughter standing on the back of her mother. Sulaimani.

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and placed on a rug or small mattress on the floor. The children were 5 years and 4 months old, respectively. The little girl lay covered with a towel. No doctor was summoned to issue a death certificate. It was said that this is unnecessary in the case of small children. The death is notified later to the authorities. As the funeral was to take place the same day, one of the men of the house was sent to the *sūq* for a suitable piece of white cotton material for the cerements, whilst the women of the house heated water for washing the corpse. This must include both the small wash, performed prior to prayer: hands, forearms, feet and a light smoothing of the hair on the head with a damp hand, and the big wash, which includes the whole body, so that the deceased achieves complete ritual purity[180]. The little girl had died in the neighbouring house to my interpreter's home in Sulaimani, where I lived. It had originally been an ordinary rich man's house, but had now declined into a slum building inhabited by several families. In the centre of the courtyard there was a watercourse from which the several families on the property fetched water for household purposes. This water, the doubtful cleanliness of which was possibly the cause of the little girl's illness and death, was not used for washing the corpse. Many petrol cans of good municipal water were fetched from my interpreter's home, where water was laid in. A big cauldron was put over a fire in the courtyard. On the floor in one of the rooms at the side of the dead child sat the mother, grandmother and aunt, eulogizing the child and bewailing its death. This death lament, an old heathen custom, has been retained although

4: Hansen E-5 (1957) 198 MA11 Kurd MA11

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contrary to the precepts of Islam[181]. Other women sat around the three, but no men were present. By the gate at the far end of the courtyard stood the child's father and some other men waiting their turn in the ritual of the funeral. After some time the corpse washer made her appearance carrying some purchased white material in his arms. As the deceased was of female sex she had to be laid-out by a woman[182]. There was 3½ yds. of material for the child. The washer divided it into several pieces, each for a set purpose, without using either knife or scissors. First the selvages (the weaving edges) on the long sides were torn off. The length of the child from crown to feet was then measured with about 0.15 m. added to each end, and the material was torn across. The larger of the two pieces was laid aside. This was to constitute the outer wrapping. The remainder of the cloth was again torn asunder so that four pieces were obtained, two oblong and two square. Of these, one of the oblong pieces, with needle and thread, was handed to one of the women present—a friend of the house, not in the child's immediate circle. This piece of cloth was sewn together into a bag which was later to be used as a washing glove for the right hand of the corpse washer[183]. The cerements, called collectively *kafan*[184], must consist of an unequal number of pieces of cloth[185]. Whilst dividing the material this rule was respected in a very ingenious way. The original division of the material was into seven. As the piece, designed for the glove, dropped out, the torn piece of one selvage was divided in the middle making the number of the pieces seven again. The oblong piece of material bigger than the piece that had been sewn together for a washing glove was moistened in the middle with the mouth to make it easier to tear, and was given a longitudinal slit in the centre large enough for a child's head to pass through. The small, unsewn shirt, a poncho, was thus completed. The two square pieces were folded together in triangles, the one intended as a head covering, the other as a brow band. The material I saw used was white, unwashed cotton material. According to Lane, the colour most used is white or green, but any colour can be used except blue[186].

The washing of the little girl was done by the body washer in the courtyard, assisted by another woman, who poured water over the body with a scoop and rinsed the soap away. The mother, grandmother and aunt were not present. The child was undressed, laid first on its back and then on its stomach on a circular, inverted, metal service tray. The child was lathered three times[187] by the gloved hand, and rinsed. The washer cleaned the ears nose and genital opening, and pressed the stomach in order to clean the bowels. Ordinary white toilet soap was used, and the rinsing was done with hot water. Lying in the lap of the body washer, the child was then thoroughly dried in a big towel, *xawl*, and laid upon a couch of rugs, the uppermost of which was a woollen prayer rug with fringes, on which lay the shroud. The unsewn poncho was then put on the child, as was the head covering and the brow band. The child's arms were stretched out along its body, and the cerement folded around it. The two short pieces of the torn selvage were tied around the cerement, one at each end. The largest piece of selvage was tied around the child's body, half way down, outside the cerement.

When the small white parcel was ready for the prayer carpet it was folded around it—and the women's part was finished. One of the men, not the father, who had been waiting at the entrance to the courtyard, now went to the body, lifted it twice up into the prayer rug and down to the ground again. The third time he retained it in his arms and went with it through the gate to the father and other waiting men. From there it was carried to the mosque where a prayer would be said for and a

4: Hansen E-5 (1957) 1961 MA11 Kurd MA11

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Fig. 94. Diagram. Cerements made out of one length of material: a: the outer wrapping; b: the unsewn shirt; c–d: the two head coverings; e: washing glove; f: selvedges used for binding.

blessing given to the dead in accordance with *shāfi'i* rite[188]. Thereafter, still only accompanied by men[189], the little girl was borne out to the burial ground, a bare hill outside Sulaimani.

In addition to the lament for the dead, another heathen feature was retained at this funeral. Whilst the child was being dressed in the poncho and swathed in the cerements and prayer rug, which in this case acted as bier, a fowl was caught in the yard. It seemed to me it was a cock, but I may have been mistaken and it was a large hen. Blackman[190] relates concerning the *fellāhin* in Egypt that: "when a child dies, a hen is killed ...". The bird was decapitated, and it was said that the head was to be buried with the dead child in order to avert further deaths in the family, where, a fortnight earlier, the child's maternal uncle had died, for which reason the women in the house were wearing black and white chequered material in their costumes as a sign of mourning.

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The little boy died in my interpreter's home in Sulaimani between night and morning. He was immediately taken out of his cradle and placed on a mattress in the courtyard covered by his mother's black *abā*. The cradle was at once stowed away on a pile of firewood that bounded the cookhouse on the courtyard side. Despite the early hour a man was sent to the *sūq* for some white cotton material for cerements. It was said that in cases of death the owner of the booth can be called out even in the middle of the night, as it is essential that new, unwashed and unused material is used for the cerements. As the child was a boy, the washing had to be performed by a man—in this case a *mulla*

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summoned from the mosque. He was assisted by the child's maternal uncle, *xāl*. The washing was done, as had been the case with the little girl, unseen by the mother and close female relatives. In this home it was performed in the bath room. Being a woman, I was unable to see what the child was placed upon, but the body was dressed in the antechamber of the room on a bench there. In this case, the death involving a male, the material for cerements and washing glove was torn into pieces by a man, the uncle, though the washing glove was also here sewn by one of the women (half-sister of the dead child). Neither the mother nor any other woman of the house broke into lamentation, and no sacrifice of any animal was made, but just as with the little girl, the child glided out of its mother's world from the moment the corpse washer had lifted it up and carried it into the bathroom. Later, it was carried to the mosque wrapped, as the little girl had been, in a prayer rug outside the cerements. In the grave the body lies on the right side with the face pointing in the direction towards Mekka. The dead are covered with stones, and then with earth in a flattened oblong mound. Two flat, roughly-hewn oblong slabs—one at the head and one at the feet[191]—are raised. The burial grounds outside the villages and provincial towns were, as a rule, marked by one or more big trees, the only trees of any great size in the landscape. Burial places looked bare and barren, like those in Arabia. In 1894 Ostrup[192] stressed the great difference between the dreary, naked burial grounds of the Arabs, devoid of vegetation, and those of the Turks, which are planted and have sculptured gravestones, whereas the Arab stones, like those in Kurdish burial grounds, are rough, undecorated, and without inscriptions. According to what I was told by my interpreter, a relative's grave is visited for five years after the death. The women went out there every Friday, a thing I did not notice in respect of the children's deaths. After that the grave is forgotten.

The religious and mourning meal for friends and acquaintances referred to by Juynboll[193], customary in Islamic areas, was not given in the case of the two children's deaths. The day the child died, no food was cooked in the house, and the only thing obtainable was bread and water melon. Nikitine mentions that among Kurds a special pastry[194] was issued three days after the funeral to neighbours and friends. This was only done in the case of an adult death, not with a child, a thing I both noticed and was told. Some hours after the death visits of condolence begin. They are made by women, always without jewellery. These visits continued for three days. As part of the mourning ceremony the bathroom that had been used for the washing of the corpse was closed, and neither heated nor used for the next eight days. The period of mourning for a child is fourteen days, during which time the cinema is not visited and picnics are not attended. For an adult member of the family the mourning period was said to last for two to three years, visits of condolence being paid for a week. During the mourning years visits may be paid to other families in cases of deaths, but otherwise people remain at home. Women wear black or dark coloured dresses, and any marriage is celebrated as quietly as possible. The sudden death of an old man at Topzawa the day before a triple wedding resulted in the man's dance, otherwise obligatory, being dropped.

To sum up the most typical features of Kurdish funerals in Iraq: They take place immediately after death. No death certificate is issued if the deceased is an infant. The cerements must be of new, white cotton material, which even in the middle of the night can be purchased in the *sūq*, the owner of the booth being summoned for this purpose. Girls are washed by women and boys by men; in both